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ABSTRACT

Noting that teachers have expressed a need for more information on how they can incorporate whole language into their classrooms, this paper describes ways of combining whole language techniques in a program that continues to use the basal reader. The paper first offers a brief view of the basic steps often used to incorporate predictable books into a basal program and then describes a year-long project in which a college reading methods instructor volunteered to teach (using predictable books and basals) on a daily basis with a group of 15 first graders. Sample lessons (emphasizing fluent reading, writing, and other language skills) written by graduate students of the college reading methods teacher are presented next, and these are followed by two learning sequences--one to use when the basal reader is the major method of instruction and the other to use when the basal is used as a supplemental book. It is concluded that observational data in the classroom supports the combination of predictable books and the basal reader approaches to reading instruction. (RS)

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INTEGRATING PREDICTABLE BOOK TECHNIQUES WITH BASAL READER INSTRUCTION

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INTEGRATING PREDICTABLE BOOK TECHNIQUES WITH BASAL READER INSTRUCTION

The predictable book approach to reading, a whole language approach, is based on the idea that children should learn to read from whole, interesting pieces of literature with the teacher providing a fluent model. The whole story or poem is presented to the class first by the teacher and then, through multiple readings, the children learn to read it themselves. After the whole story or poem has been shared in this way, the class may then look at specific parts of the story for word and language study. The material used is carefully selected by the teacher so that it is predictable and the children cannot help but read it as they participate in the lesson. Much of the work is done with the whole class.

Teachers have had professional books available for some time which aid in the study of teaching techniques which have been found effective in this approach (Holdaway, 1979; and McCracken and McCracken, 1979.) Teacher materials have also been available since Martin and Brogan's Sounds of Language readers were first published about 25 years ago. The Scott Foresman Reading Systems and Reading Unlimited basal readers of the 1970s included a number of predictable stories in the early readers. The appearance of the Story Box materials in the early 1980s was the beginning of a publishing market for predictable books and big books which has dramatically increased each year with many publishers now offering similar materials.

As teachers acquire more of these materials, read more whole language articles, and attend meetings where speakers advocate whole language teaching, they express a need for information on how they can either become total whole language teachers or, more frequently in our area of the country, combining whole language techniques in a program where they continue to use the basal reader as a portion of their program.

This article will give a brief view of the basic steps often used in predictable book teaching, describe a year long project working with children in integrating predictable books and basal reader instruction, give some specific strategies for use at various grade levels, and share two learning sequences developed to apply these techniques to basal reader instruction.

Basic Methodology - The basic steps included in a lesson might be as follows:

1. The teacher reads or recites a story or poem to the class. The children may or may not see a printed version at this point. The teacher reads fluently without many pauses for comments, questions, or discussion.
2. The teacher reads the material again fluently as the children follow along in a large copy version or with their individual copies of the selection. The children are invited to start to chime in whenever they can. There may be short pauses during this reading to discuss pictures or point out something of interest about the story. If a Big Book or large chart version of the selection is used, the teacher guides the children's eyes using a pointer.

3. The teacher and the class read it again as many times as possible. If pupils are quickly fluent with the story or lose interest soon, this part of the lesson is discontinued and further readings are scheduled for another day.
4. Individuals or parts of the group read selected parts of the story, with the teacher providing a fluent model whenever they experience difficulty.
5. Follow-up activities are used to reinforce word attack skills (framing selected sight words, covering up the ing ending to a root word, finding a word that begins the same as a given word, for example). To stimulate writing, the lesson may continue with a look at the pattern the author has used with the children expanding on a given sentence or substituting their own words for those of the author orally or in writing.
6. Large copies of the original stories or poems or large copies of the children's writing based on the story pattern are often displayed in the room for additional exposure. Children are encouraged to return to these materials for both independent and teacher guided rereading.
7. New stories are introduced frequently, perhaps every day, and rereading of old stories and continued work with those stories continues for many days. Often a favorite will be used again later in the year as the children continue to rework familiar patterns into their own versions.

These steps are an over-simplification of the methods used, but it does give the reader a feel for the basic structure of the program.

The Year's Work - Shortly before school began in the fall, I, a college reading methods instructor, asked permission to volunteer teach on a daily basis with a group of first graders. Included in the agreement with the school were the following conditions:

1. I would take 15 first graders, five from each of the three first grade rooms, each morning of the school year for one hour on Monday-Wednesday-Friday and one and one-half hours on Tuesday-Thursday. I was given an empty classroom to use for this project.
2. The students would be those identified by the classroom teachers as probably within the average range of ability. No gifted students or potential reading disability students were to be selected. Teachers and parents were assured that no formal research was being done on the children. Rather, I was interested in observing the children and collecting descriptive data with reference to the success of my integration project.
3. I would hold the major responsibility for teaching these children to read. Naturally, these children also received all kinds of additional exposure during the day's activities back in the regular classroom.
4. I promised that the required basal reader for the district would be used with the children at some point during the year. I was granted permission, however, to use no basal instruction at all for at least the first two months, relying instead on predictable book methods and materials entirely for this initial period of instruction. It was also agreed that when the basal was used, I would be permitted to teach the children at proper instructional level without

feeling a pressure to complete certain books by the end of the year. After the basal was begun, predictable book work was to be a part of the program at least two days a week.

With everyone in agreement, the program began. The 15 children were selected and began coming to the reading class beginning with the third week of school. The program was explained to parents in an evening meeting, and their consent was required before the children could participate. Instruction was given to the whole class with individual activities provided in learning center type settings. The materials used were the Story Box Stage One books (Get Ready, Read Together, and Ready-Set-Go books), Sounds I Remember and Sounds of Home from the Sounds of Language books, Scott Foresman's Reading Unlimited preprimers, and later in the year, the Scholastic Big Books and Shared Books. (See the Reference section at the end of the article for complete title and address information.) Large copies were displayed throughout the room and reread frequently as were the regular size books. Beginning phonics work was done somewhat along the lines of the Robert and Marlene McCracken (1979) method. Many manipulative activities with word cards, sentence strips and magnetic letters were available. The children worked under teacher guidance with these activities so they would be able to be independent during this "center time" later in the year.

The basal reader, a very heavy phonics program, was begun in November following individual testing. The children were grouped by instructional level into three groups and moved through this material at different rates. The class still met as a whole for new predictable book lessons for at least one-half hour at the

beginning of each Tuesday and Thursday class and continued to work with the predictable book materials independently each day during their centers time.

I then began to teach a graduate course in the predictable book approach as an off-campus offering in January, and the teachers cited at the beginning of the article were all members of that class. The class studied carefully the books of Holdaway and the McCrackens as well as the teacher's manuals for Martin and Brogan's Sounds of Language Readers, Holdaway's Shared Books and Big Books for Scholastic and Melser and Cowley's Story Box books. Each week the teachers tried a specific technique under study with their classes utilizing the other materials. The emphasis was on fluent reading, writing, and other language skills. Specific skills were also addressed in the lessons.

Many lessons for kindergarten, transitional first grade, first grade, second grade, second-third combination, third grade, kindergarten through eighth grade substitute classes, and adult non-reader and low level reader classes were presented. A few sample lessons describing the materials and techniques used in these classes and written in first person by the teachers who delivered the lessons follow:

Transitional First Grade

Using an old favorite, 1,2, Buckle My Shoe, we did the following lesson using a pocket chart, cards, and sentence strips. First, I printed each numeral and word on cards and also made picture cards for she, door, sticks, straight, and hen. We read this together many times using the picture cards and then substituted the correct word for each picture. Second, the number words were substituted for the

numerals, and, third, the phrase Buckle My Shoe was substituted for the three individual words.

The children love to move the number words and phrases around and read the poem all mixed up and then rearrange it correctly and read it again. We have done the same activity using Pease Porridge Hot. This procedure was taken from Marlene and Robert McCracken's use of the pocket chart.

During February, we watched three film strips, sang songs, read stories and poems about Abe Lincoln. I then wrote a simple sentence, Abe Lincoln was a man., on the chalkboard. Using Bill Martin, Jr.'s idea on expanding sentences, we did some brainstorming with the following result:

Abe Lincoln was a		*man with a kind stepmother.*
	thin *tall* *kind*	*who lived in a log cabin.*
	nice *skinny* *honest*	*who freed black people.*

Each child told a fact they remembered from film strips, songs, stories or poems, and it was recorded on the chalkboard. The children then wrote their sentence on paper and drew a picture to go with their sentence. They read their sentence to the class.

Third Grade

I used the big book What Do You Do With a Kangaroo? by Mercer Mayer with my third graders. I read it first to them. Next we all read the story aloud together. We had a good discussion all about the story and sequenced the animals as we remembered them in the story. We read the book again aloud as a class the next day and really worked on reading with expression. I then divided the children up into two groups and each had a part. We practiced and then presented it to the second grades and the other third grade.

The third day we again, and I emphasize again, read the story aloud together. I told them they were going to write their own story patterning after What Do You Do With A Kangaroo? We brainstormed on different animals they would like to write about, and the places the animals might be. Each student then chose their animals and wrote their title, for example, What Do You Do With A Tiger? The children had heard and read the story so many times, they were anxious to get started. They were told to write three to five events. After their events were written, they illustrated and we put each book into a large book. They knew the pattern. All of my children wrote and were excited to do so.

Adult Basic Reading

This experiment in teaching basic level adults was conducted with a

group of mentally-handicapped adults who live in a group home. The major goal of these handicapped adults is to learn basic living skills to enable them to someday live self-sufficiently in a supervised apartment setting.

The teaching objective was to teach the class about grocery buying. The experiment was to use a predictable book approach to teaching reading, an approach usually thought of as being used strictly with primary grade children.

The strategies I used were Don Holdaway's method for identifying sight words and Marlene and Robert McCracken's strategies for dictation, theme, and chanting.

During the first class we discussed shopping for groceries, especially generic groceries. (Generic foods are a problem to adults who rely on the pictures on the cans.)

I wrote this sentence on the board: "I could buy some _____." We brainstormed for words to fill in the blank. The words suggested by the class were: corn, beans, peas, tomatoes, spinach, carrots, and mixed vegetables. (Oddly enough, all vegetables - even though I had asked for any kind of food.)

As each word was suggested, I wrote the word in the blank (rapidly making myself a card with each word.) When the class was over for

the day, I made a card with each word.) When the class was over for the day, I made a card for each student with each word printed on it, for the students' individual word boxes.

Each time I put a word in the blank, I read the sentence aloud. Then the class read the sentence to me. I used the words I had written on the cards as flash cards and the students read the words.

The second session began with my taking dictation from the students, after having talked about the importance of being a wise food shopper and the savings we could realize by buying generic foods.

The students dictated sentences such as:
"I like to eat _____. I could buy some _____. I know how to cook _____. I can save money with generic foods."

I read the sentences to the class, then we chanted the sentences together. They read the sentences to me individually. They read the sentences again as I used a mask to cover all but the first letter of the food words.

The class enjoyed this activity and even the student with the lowest grade level (1.9) felt at ease participating. The student with the highest grade level (3.4) was not bored. All of the students learned to read the labels on cans of generic foods.

After about two months of experience with these methods and materials and hearing each week of the projects of the other class members, it became increasingly clear that none of us was satisfied any longer with the format of the basal reader lesson as it is typically followed. Knowing that our children could read more fluently in the other materials we were using and could do very fine work with writing, the class and I set out to develop a teaching plan for the basal that better fit our current understand of reading instruction.

As the preliminary teaching undertaken prior to writing the teaching plans indicated, we really needed two plans to follow. One plan could beused when we wanted to use the basal as a major method of instruction and the second plan could be used when the basal, usually a supplemental book, was being used to provide additional practice without much emphasis on skills work. The two teaching plans follow:

Applying Predictable Book Theory to Basal Reader Instruction

1. *Learning Sequence Format: Using the basal for major instruction.*
   - A. *Objectives*
     1. *The children will read a basal story fluently in rate and expression.*
     2. *The children will answer comprehension questions and participate in discussion about the basal story.*
     3. *The children will show proficiency in skills necessary to*

pass the basal test(s).

B. *Learning Activities*

1. *The teacher reads the whole story to the children while they listen with books closed. The teacher shows the pictures as she reads. She does not comment about comprehension this first time through the story.*
2. *The teacher reads the story again while the children follow along in their books. Beginning readers should use markers; accomplished readers would not. The teacher may pause for discussion of pictures and text or ask comprehension questions.*
3. *Introduce vocabulary and word attack skills using vocabulary and skills charts or directions in the teacher's manual.*
4. *Assign silent reading of the story with a buddy nearby to help with unknown words. Beginning readers may need to do this step in reading group with the teacher.*
5. *1st/2nd grade - The children oral read assigned portions of the story while the other group members listen with books closed. The other class members are an audience while the reader stands by the teacher or sits in the "Reader's Chair." Two or three students can oral read if different characters are needed in the story. Oral rereading in*

groups of two seated around the room might follow. (Students volunteer to tape.)

2nd/3rd grade - All students will oral read the story taking turns with a buddy. Selected students will oral read some portions of the story to the teacher at least once a week. Students may volunteer to tape record a section they feel they can read well for use at a listening station.

6. *Teach selected skills work from the manual as is actually needed by this group. Choose some enrichment activities in lieu of the skipped work.*

C. *Evaluation:*

1. *Listen to oral reading for fluency in both rate and expression.*
2. *Observe participation in discussion and question answers.*
3. *Students passed skills test(s) required the basal program.*

Applying Predictable Book Theory to Basal Reader Instruction

2. *Learning Sequence Format: Using a supplemental basal for plateau reading.*

A. *Objectives:*

1. *The children will read a basal story fluently in rate and expression.*
2. *The children will answer comprehension questions and*

participate in discussion about the basal story.

B. *Learning Activities:*

1. *The teacher reads the story while the children follow along in their books. This may be done one page at a time or the whole story at once, as the teacher prefers. Beginning readers would use markers; accomplished readers would not. The teacher may pause for discussion of pictures and text or ask comprehension questions.*
2. *The children read orally as a group with the teacher one page at a time. They may repeat this step if needed.*
3. *Alternative A - Individuals orally read the page, a column, a character part, or a paragraph as assigned by the teacher. Other class members are listeners for this activity. Additional oral reading may be done later with a buddy, if it is needed.*

   Alternative B - All students will oral read the story taking turns with a buddy. Selected students will oral read some portions of the story to the teacher at least once a week.

C. *Evaluation*

1. *Listen to oral reading for fluency in both rate and expression.*
2. *Observe participation in discussion and question answers.*

After this work, all of us were convinced of the efficacy of integrating holistic

techniques as used in the predictable book approach with the basal reader. After a semester of study and application of the methods and materials of Bill Martin, Jr., Peggy Brogan, Don Holdaway, Robert and Marlene McCracken, June Mesler and Joy Cowley, we reaffirmed the idea that the basal reader cannot be only component in a well rounded reading program. The observational data in my classroom supported the combination of approaches we all tried in this project in several ways. First, the children read a large number of whole books, far more than the five books commonly found in a first grade basal reader program. Children's attitudes toward reading and interest in all aspects of books such as illustration, author, publisher, and story pattern were heightened, showing an appreciation for reading beyond any previously observed in this age of child. Even though their ability to read in the basal reader differed at year end, ranging from beginning primer level to second grade, first semester, all children in the class were able to read all shared books fluently.

We did not reject the basal reader because of the structure and scope and sequence of skills that it provides. However, the growth demonstrated by the integration of the predictable book techniques with the reader seems to offer teachers the best of two worlds. In the end, fostering positive attitudes and pupils who read is the measure of success for all reading teachers.

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